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**The Geographical Pattern of Religious Activity After the
Change of the Political System in Hungary**

PhD Thesis Abstract

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1. Scientific background and objectives

1.1. Problem

Geography of religion (GR), parallel to the increase of civilizational conflicts seems to shift from the peripheries to the main branches of geography all over the world (PARK, C. 1994). In connection with this SAMUEL HUNTINGTON (2006) speaks about the renaissance of religions, while according to C. Peach religion can become a new field of social geographical researches in the first decades of the 21st century. We can add that the case is the same in our country as well. The theoretical principles of the researches aiming at the religious activity and GR of Hungary can be summarized as follows:

(1) The topicality of the researches on the field of GR is demanded by the modern science of geography itself arising from the claim of inner reform. One reason for it is that religion and space have a versatile connection system; another is that the study of religion can open new ways and fields for geography by its interdisciplinary nature.

(2) The collapse of the political and ideological shackles can motivate the Hungarian science of geography.

(3) Religions itself requires multidimensional analyses. The reasons for this are the following:

- Churches represent great amount of social capital.
- The demand for the social role played by the churches and the confidence in them is higher in Hungary than in the other European countries.
- World religions have produced a perfectly original and unique harmony creating technique. That is why they are capable to give proper answers to certain social challenges.
- In the geographical localization of social activities the spiritual content is also present besides the natural facilities and financial means. (NEMES NAGY 1998). Spiritual content means intellectual capital, innovativity and spirituality.

1.2. Research history

The first researches on GR in Hungary were carried out in the end of the 19th century. The first task was to define where GR takes place in the system of sciences. In this field Géza Czirbusz, Jenő Cholnoky, Aurél Hézser and Ferenc Fodor took the first steps. Out of the few GR descriptions of that time Gyula Prinz's analyses are the most significant ones.

The couple of years after 1945 represented a turn in the history of the GR researches. During the "fifties" we can label the situation of GR with "exile", "illegality" and "pseudonyms". The discourse on religious relations was returned to the frames of church geography and other associate disciplines. After the political system change in Hungary there was a spectacular increase of GR publications. This meant not only numerical but also thematic increase as well. Besides geography, statistics, sociology, history, ethnography, science of religion and even theology contributed to the discourse. After half a century census data related to religion were published.

GR emerged in a title of a study (which was an edited volume) first in 1993 (L. HUNYADI 1993). It has become the cornerstone for this discipline in Hungary since then. LÁSZLÓ HUNYADI (1998) is the one who has provided the most elaborate and sophisticated summary of GR so far. He interpreted the relation system of the religious and geographical environment as a network of dynamic interactions that sometimes tend to regulate each other. He distanced himself from both deterministic and evolutionist approaches.

The „rebirth” of GR motivated other, new geographical sub-disciplines, too. The publications deriving from this effect can be considered the parts of the demographical and statistical studies mentioned above.

1.3. Purposes

In the course of my investigation I aimed at answering the following questions:

- (1) Are there denominationally detectable differences among the different aspects of religious activity?
- (2) In what and to what extent do religions and churches affect in Hungary besides the modernizational and secularizational tendencies?
- (3) How much and what kind of space-relevant effects do the churches and denominations have?

There are three viewpoints that I employed to answer the above questions. The first one can be defined *spatial* in character. The second one has *quantitative* nature. The third one is the *social* point of view. All these are framed by some *ideographical* and *positivist* nature due to some considerations of phenomenology of religion.

Religion and population – Religious population?

The most common relationship can be observed between religion and population. Earlier studies mostly dealt with this issue. The connection between the demographic composition of the population (sex, age, and marital status) and religiousness was considered in a stereotypic way in the scholarly literature. It was suggested that religious population could be characterized with the following features: it is older than the average population, consists of more women than men, have more children, live in rural areas and are schooled lower. From the eighties some aspects of this stereotype could be denied (M. TOMKA 1999, 2000, 2006). Less attention was given to the mortality rate (HAGGETT, P. 2006), but some more to the investigation of deviancy and health in relation to religiosity and denominations.

Settlement – society – religion

A general statement by the sociology of religion says that religiosity changes according to the types and categories (and also the size) of settlements. Townspeople are less religious than rural people are, and the citizens of capitals and large towns are

less religious than those of smaller towns. In the course of the investigation of the available statistical data I hypothesized the following:

- (1) There are significant differences between the rates of the population that belongs to a denomination and those who do not, according to the different types and categories of settlements.
- (2) Among the types of settlements differences can be observed in terms of denominational structure.
- (3) In the stock of cities differences can be detected in terms of denominational structure depending on the periods the settlements were pronounced cities.

Religion, economy, environment

To approach the problem of economy of religion we need to answer the following theoretical questions:

- (1) Can something be economically rational at the same time when it is philosophically transcendent?
- (2) What common and what different spheres do religion and economy share?
- (3) Can economy be fit into a broader and global relation? Can an ethical ecological economy exist on a religious basis?
- (4) Do all these prevail also in Hungary?

After answering the above questions a multi-lateral analysis of the available databases (censorial, taxational and other) is necessary. In the course of this analysis the following issues emerge:

- (5) Can the economical role and activity of the individual denominations be examined?
- (6) Are there any detectable connections between denominationality and economical activity or economical success?

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Databases, resources

The databases and resources I used can be divided into two groups: prime resources (censes, national and other data-collections) and secondary resources (publications, calculations). As it seemed to serve my goals appropriately, I sectioned out the resources as follows.

Denominational data

First it is important to detect the number of the members of the individual denominations in their spatiality. Geographically mappable databases can be gained from the surveys, statistics and parish registers of the individual denominations and churches. It is usually problematic, however, to collect and standardize these data. Another issue is that what at all these data represent. They may represent formal

membership but neither religiousness nor inner commitment or faith, or the religious activity that derives from all these. This is why that kind of databases are not used in this dissertation.

The most useful data for the purposes of my dissertation are those that come from statistical collections and censuses, though statistical data can also carry some problems. The questionnaires used at censuses ask questions only about self-categorization in connection with religiousness. I still had no choice but to rely on these materials.

Denominational institutions

The elements of the ecclesiastic infrastructure can easily be localized and they have significant space-forming power, too. Their mapping is allowed both by the inner statements of the churches and denominations and the several special secular databases. The investigation and the use of this material makes it possible to detect the spatial and social effect and role of the denominations, and characterize them in spatial terms.

Economical and financial data

One of the most sensible segments of the GR researches is made up by the examination of economical, financial and substantial situation of the individual denominations, though this is the most elaborate part of the “traditional” GR studies. The databases of this field are partly overlapped by the databases of the personnel stuff (priests, other employees in the ecclesiastical institutions) and the institutions (educational, medical, and the social infrastructure and services). It is otherwise very circuitous to get and collect these data.

The most plausible solution seems to be the summarization of the data referring to the public financial resources. Such are the budget supports or the statistics on the income tax offerings. These can show the financial power of the individual denominations but at the same time they reflect on the financial-social situation of the members of a denomination as well.

2.2. Methods for analysis

Since GR – inside social geography – can be considered the part of population geography, it can use the most of the methods of that field. We can state, however, that there are no specific population geographical methods and techniques. The working methods depend on the subject and the purpose in most cases. Besides the general geographical presentation techniques (tables, maps and diagrams) I adopted some other methods from demography and statistics. Because of the historical nature of the processes of population geography I cannot ignore the use of some methods adopted from history either. The methods and viewpoints of regional geographical researches are also represented in the course of investigating some related problems. Some chapters of this dissertation attempt to show the spatial and functional organization and patterns of religion. It also aims at using the spatial inequality indicators. For gaining

and presenting these results I applied the database operator and picture editor programs of Microsoft Office 2003.

2.3. Religious Activity Index (RAI)

Finally I attempted to create an indicator called Religious Activity Index (RAI). This indicates all those measurable and examinable activities and behaviors whose power can be detected in geographical space and can be numeralized. Its elements are the following:

- (1) (DPR) the rate of the population that belongs to denominations or churches (censual self-categorization)
- (2) (DII) denominational institutional index (the number of educational, medical and social institutions per 100000 inhabitants)
- (3) (DCI) denominational central index (the number of the main centers of the denominations per 100000 inhabitants)
- (4) (RDI) religious diversity index (the denominational variegation – in a probability calculational approach)

With the use of values of the four indexes I created a complex Bennett-type indicator that I named Religious Activity Index (RAI).

The four indicators were not worth to be contracted into factors, but we can state that they reflect on two aspects of religious activity. The “depth” (vertical features) of religious activity can be described by DPR. The “width” of religious practice (horizontal features) is shown by RDI. DII and DCI can be considered the “roots” of the two other indicators. The identifications, however, are not perfectly unambiguous. (See Table 1)

Table 1. The correlation matrix of RAI

	DPR	DII	DCI	RDI
DPR	----	-0,180500	-0,367709	-0,806300
DII	-0,180500	----	0,160956	0,477229
DCI	-0,367709	0,160848	----	0,625787
RDI	-0,806300	0,477229	0,625787	----

3 Summary of results

3.1. The fixation the Hungarian frames of the discipline

GR deals with the mutual connections of religion and space, that is, the influence of the religions exercised on the geographical environment and vice versa (RINSCHDE, G.1999.). That is why GR has very broad disciplinary connections.

According to particular approaches GR is the subject of cultural geography (JOHNSTON, R. J et al 2000; HUNYADI, L. 2002; TRÓCSÁNYI, A. – TÓTH, J. 2002). At the same time German geographers consider it a part of social geography (BERÉNYI, I. 1992). Other approaches claim that GR is one of the sectoral geographies, an independent discipline of the social geographic subsystem, besides human geography, population geography and cultural geography (VOFKORI, L. 2003).

According to other approaches, GR has to be set amongst the sectoral geographies, inside population geography, in the frame of social-economical geography (TATAI, Z. 1999). Some scholars say that GR do not constitute a separate sub-discipline inside population geography (KOVÁCS, Z. 2007). According to the 1999 position of the Committee on Geography I of Hungarian Academy of Sciences, GR – besides ethnical geography, – is a branch of population geography (BECSEI, J. 1999).

Finally I suggest a possible distribution of GR, according to which we distinguish general, sectoral, regional, and historical GR. (See Figure 1)

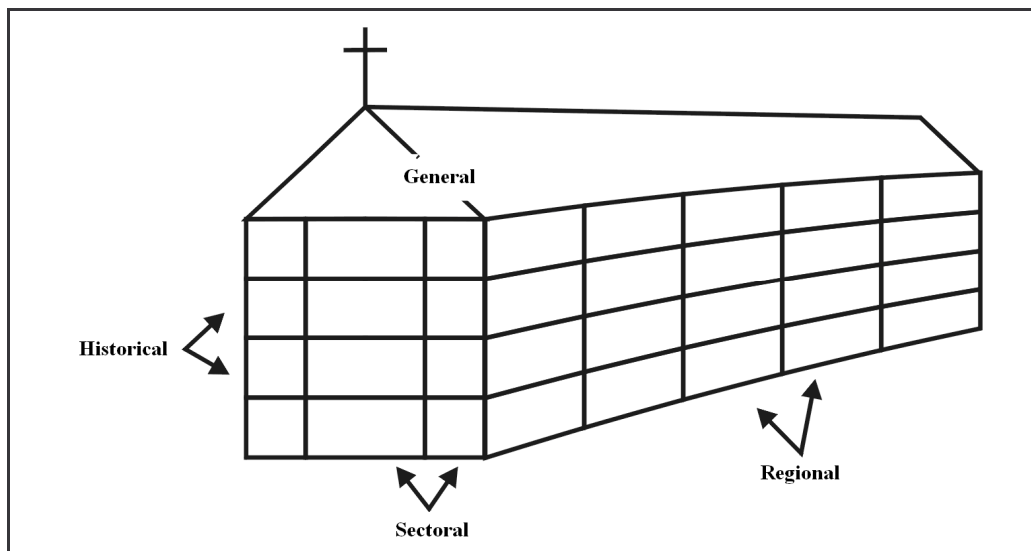


Figure 1: Distribution of GR

3.2. The religious features of the population

The less religious features of the population can be shown by the denominational composition (see Figure 2). The investigation of the different demographical indicators is much more important. Though the connection between denominationality and proliferation cannot be detected globally, referring to each denomination, in the case of the individual denominations, however, the value is higher than the average. Investigating the issue from the side of mortality – by sociological analyses – we can state that religion plays an important role in health care.

When examining the composition of the population according to sex and age, we can detect the over-representationality of women and the higher rate of the old people. In the case of the historical churches, the ageing index increases together with the decrease of the number of church members.

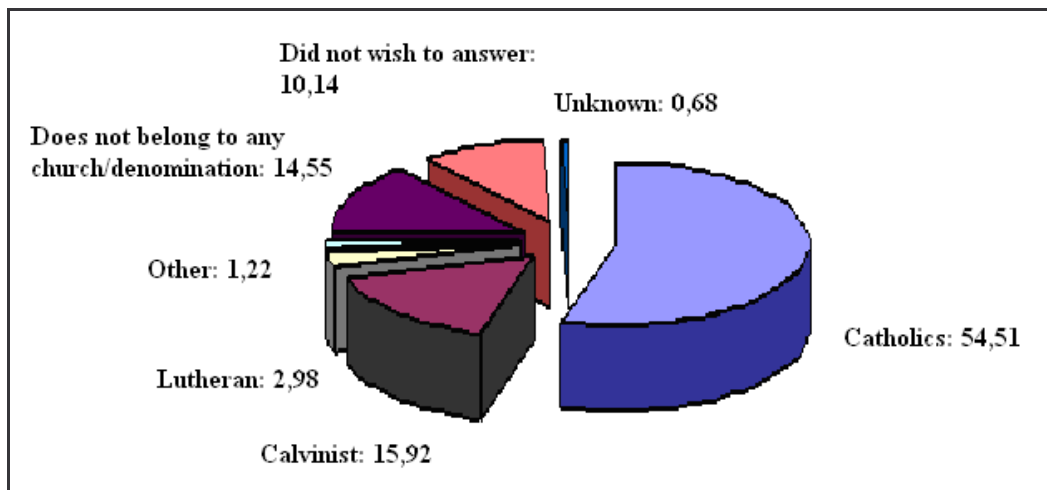


Figure 2. The rate of the individual denominations from the whole population (percent) (By KSH 2001)

3.3. Religion and settlement

The settlemental distribution of the individual denominations shows some interesting features. Statistical characteristics reflect on some orderliness. The value of dispersion examined on types of settlements is the highest in the capital city. From the median data we can see that the members of the historical Christian churches tend to live in great numbers in smaller settlements, while others live on larger ones. More detailed investigations, however, provide a more elaborate picture. Though the size of the settlement shows strong correlation only with the distribution of the Jewish denomination, the distribution of the smaller denominations is not even inside the stock of cities.

By the investigation of the cities' "age" some particular consequences can be drawn. My hypothesis which said that the denominational features of the cities of the socialist era differ from that of the earlier and newer cities was not supported. Among the groups of cities we can detect significantly higher denominational rate only in the case of the newest cities. The reason is that this feature is completed by the bigger size in the case of the "old" cities, and by the social structure deriving from their historical past in the case of the "socialist" cities.

Special attention should be given to the results of the investigations of the most populous cities. By the investigation of the "top 20" cities the geographical pattern of the denominations can be detected and some unique features also emerge (e.g. Érd, Székesfehérvár).

The investigations of villages reflect on that the greater historical churches tend to be represented all over the country, since the smaller and newer denominations do not. The rates of the denominations show an inverse feature. In the case of the greater historical churches, the larger the settlements are, the smaller the rate of the individual denominations is, since in the case of the smaller churches, the larger the settlements are, the higher the rate is.

3.4. Religion and economy

Though there are some ecclesiastical enterprises and economical companies in Hungary, mainly in the service sphere, their national economical role is insignificant. They are present, however, not only in culture, education, and health service, but also in service industry and (religious) tourism.

In the background of the denominational differences and features, relating to employment and unemployment, the territorial and demographical characteristics of the individual denominations can be found. All non-Christian groups are under-represented in agriculture, because most of them live in cities. The national rate of the industrial employees is exceeded only by the rate of Catholics and the “other Christians”. The members of the great historical churches and the “other Christians” are under-represented in service industry.

The investigation of the income tax offerings suggests that the individual denominations form particularly different groups in terms of economy and income. The non religious population tends to possess higher financial status than religious population. This can partly be explained by demographical reasons. In the group of the historical church members the rate of the pensioners and the big families is higher. The members of the “richest” denominations are in their “active years” and possess a higher social-economical status.

3.5. Religion and culture

Though ecclesiastical schools have not become the defining figures of the market of school maintainers, 5 percent of the institutions and 8 percent of the students belong to them. This means the main part of the churches’ cultural role.

From educational geographical point of view, in relation to elementary education, the churches and denominations, out of the non local government school maintainers, play the most significant role (except Budapest and Heves County). The rate of denominational educational institutions is the highest in Pest, Bács-Kiskun and Békés Counties, and in Budapest. The reasons for this, in the case of the capital city, are the “firm market” and the religious heterogeneity, since in respect of South-East Hungary, the reason is the over-representation of the Calvinists, whose congregations tend to vindicate their old schools.

From the point of view of the GR and the denominations, only the 10 percent of the more than 130 churches and denominations (that is, 14 churches) maintain schools. For this reason the denominational rates and the rate of the schools maintained by churches vary, both in county and national level.

From the institution maintaining indicators of the denominations, the most significant one is the increase of the role of the churches in the health and social sphere. The rate of these institutions increased from 3 to 9 percent between 1990 and 2001. Denominations have more than average part in relation to student hostels, take caring social institutions and “home houses”.

3.6. The spatiality of the denominations

The spatial and regional effects of the individual denominations have not yet been investigated upon their merits in Hungary. The reason for this may be that there have not been available data for it. The first element of the statistical investigations can be the numeralization of the empirical facts. In this respect it seems worth to examine the spatial weight and the center of gravity of the individual denominations. The results show that the western vergency of the religious popularity is due to the effect of the Catholic denomination. The “westernest” denomination is the Lutheran one, the “easternest” is the Greek Catholic one, followed by the Calvinist denomination. The others distribute around the national center of gravity. (See Figure 3)

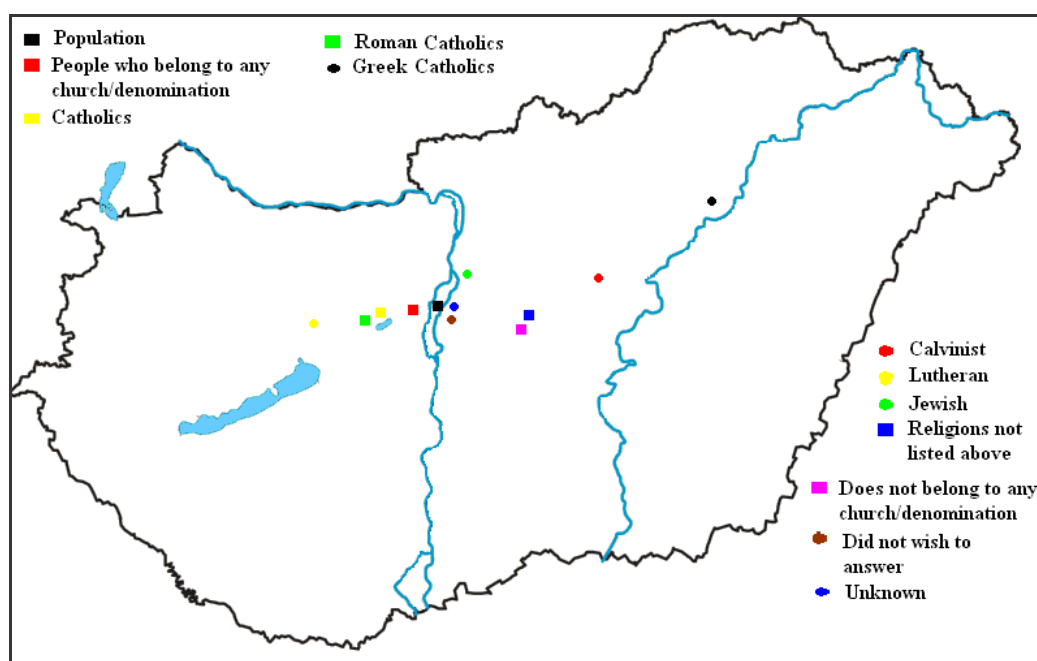


Figure 3. The center of gravity of the individual denominations (by KSH 2001)

The investigation of other territorial indicators suggest only one cautious consequence: the historical churches – by their large spread and great number – cover the space evenly, according to their numbers. Territorial differences and unevenness can be observed only in the case of the denominations with small number, in terms of different features. I investigated only the non-Christian denominations from them.

Concerning the spatial order of the non-Christian denominations, first their marginality seems outstanding. Except for Budapest, their rate can be measured only in decimal percents and they constitute only the 0.25 percent of the total population. The reason for this is fairly simple: the Jewish population, which constitutes nearly the half of the non-Christian denominations, tends to live in Budapest. (See Figure 4)

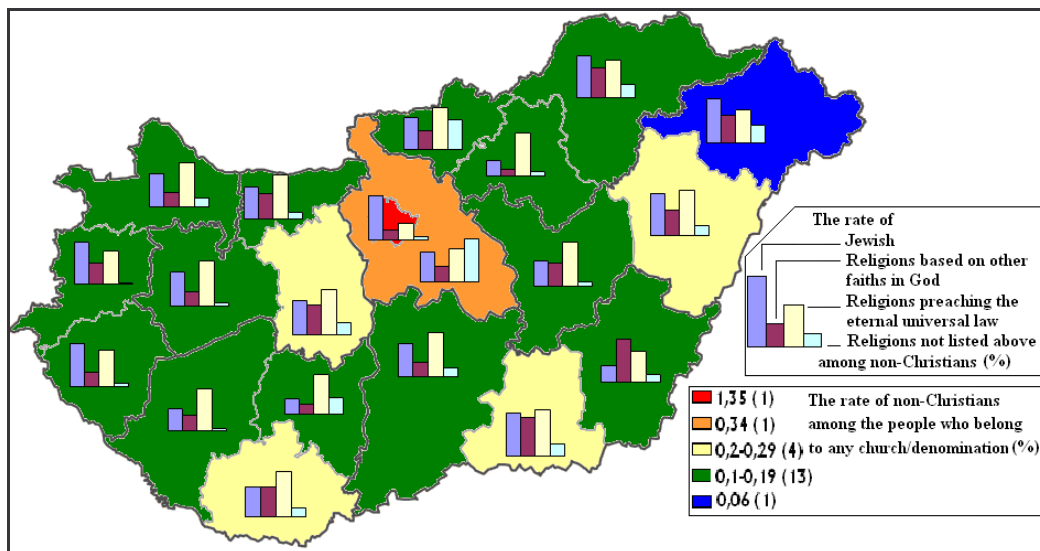


Figure 4. The rate of the non-Christian denominations, by counties, 2001 (by KSH 2001)

The investigation of religious activity from different viewpoints can result in other kinds of territorial indicators. Figure 5 shows the rate of the population that belongs to a church or denomination. (See Figure 5)

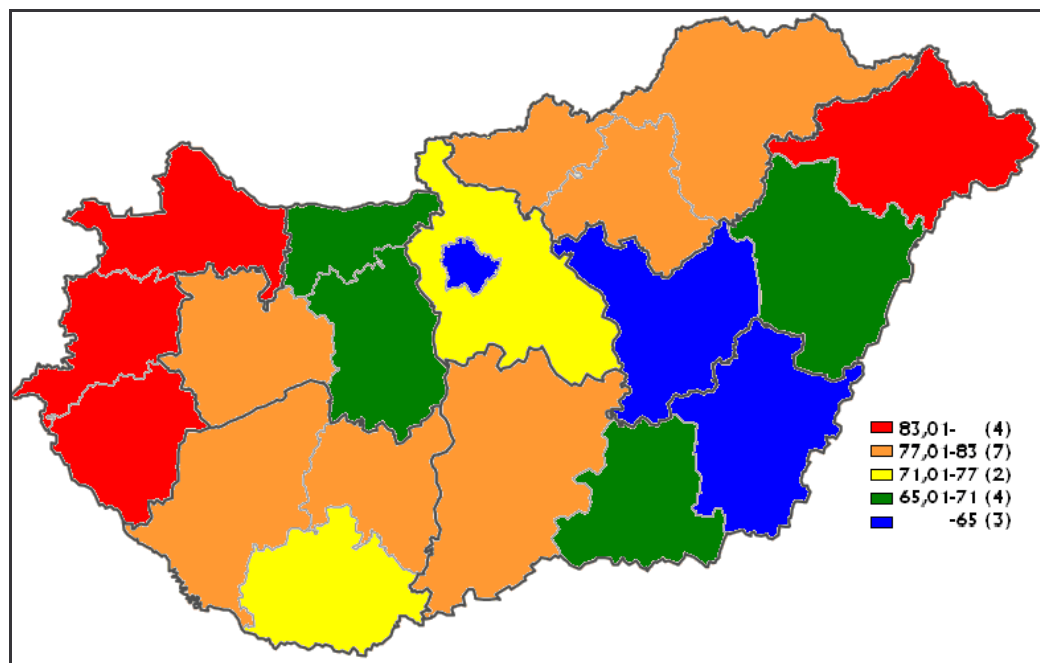


Figure 5. The rate of the population that belongs to a church or a denomination, by counties, 2001 (in percent) (by KSH 2001)

The pattern of the denominational population cannot be reduced to a single, geographically relevant reason. The most conspicuous difference is between Western Hungary and Transistia, which can be explained by the rate of the Catholic and the protestant denominations. The tendencies that diverge from this one should be explained individually. The lower values of Transdanubia (Komárom-Esztergom, Fejér and Baranya counties) can be explained with the socialist industrialization, while

in Szabolcs County the high value is due to the over-representation of the Greek Catholics and some social factors. In the case of Budapest the lower value is the product of secularization, which went hand in hand with modernization, while the relatively high value of Pest County can be due to the suburban middleclass population.

A certain level of religious activity can derive from the “provision with religious institutions” of a territory by which the denominational institutional index (DII) can be calculated. (see Figure 6) The irregular spatial pattern can be reduced to several, mainly local factors. The high values of the central region, the largest “market”, do not need any explanations. In the background of the maximal value of Békés County there are some special factors: the denominational composition and the greater role of the medical and social institutions.

The low value of Nógrád, Tolna, Zala counties may be due to the small educational market, while the average values of North-Transdanubia and the region centers can be justified by their balanced social backgrounds. The low value of Csongrád County may be due to the asymmetries of the institutional system, because it lacks the ecclesiastical social sphere. Besides all these Transdanubia may seem under-represented, which can be explained with the greater weight of the more centralized Catholic institution maintainers.

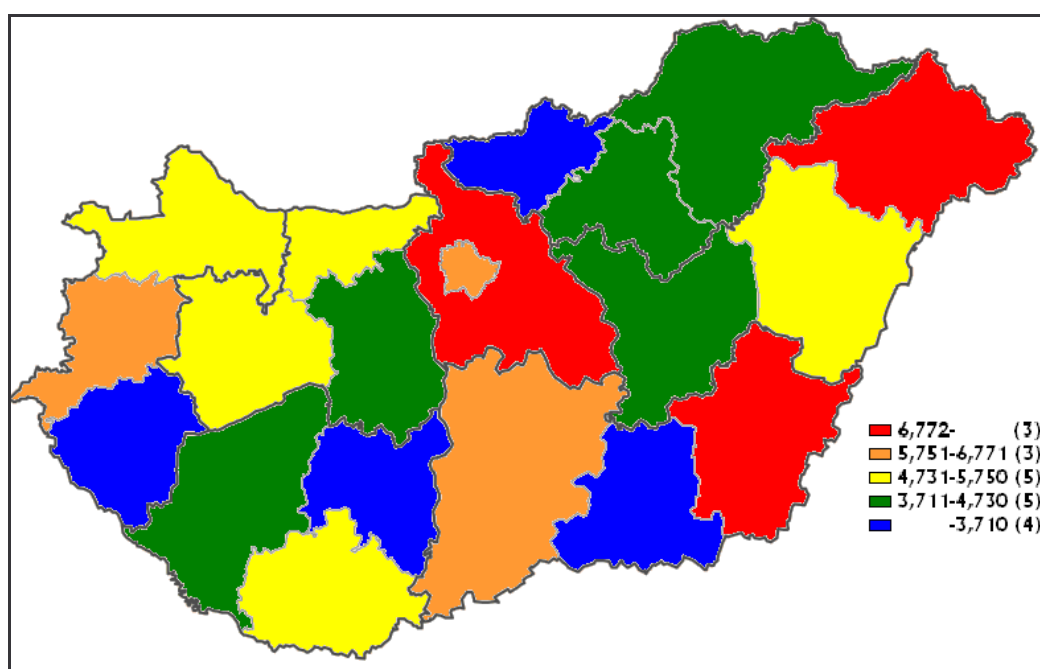


Figure 6. DII of Hungary, 2002-2007 (by the denominational homepages)

By the denominational central index (DCI) (see Figure 7) a wanly emerging space structural distribution can be observed. While in Transdanubia there is an increase from west towards east, in East Hungary there is a south-north trend. This can be related to the denominational structure of the area. The high Protestant representation of these areas could mean the basis of religious reforms and new denominations. This refers to the inner innovative power of religion. Comparing all these with the religious diversity we can get a mixed picture (see Figure 8).

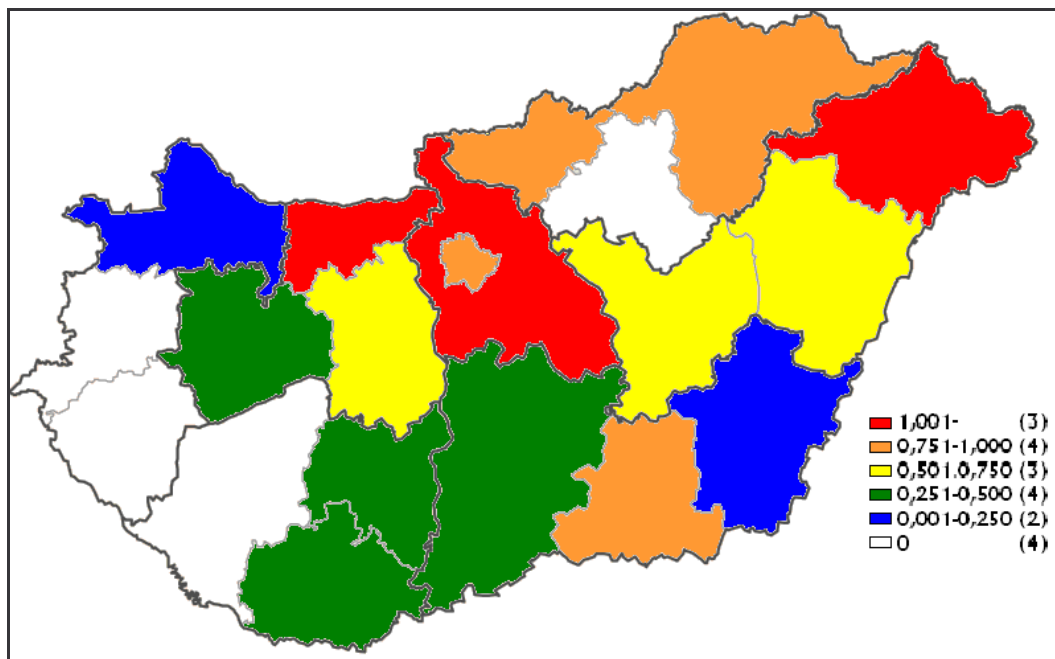


Figure 7 DCI of Hungary, 2001

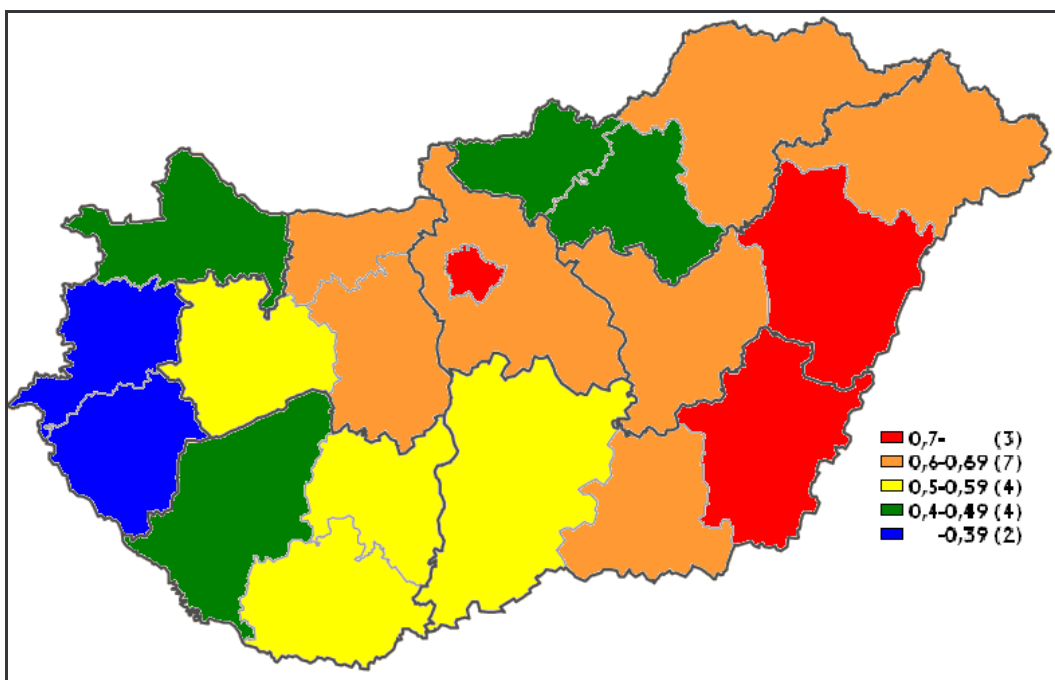


Figure 8 The values of religious diversity by counties, 2001 (by KSH 2001)

In Transdanubia religious diversity increases towards the central areas and together with the middle areas of the country it encircles the Middle Hungarian Region as a ring. The eastern periphery of the country can be characterized with outstanding religious diversity, primarily due to the high portion of the protestant population. The most spectacular concurrences between the two variables can be observed in connection with this phenomenon, though the correlation is not unambiguous (see Nógrád County, for example).

The distinguished situation of Northeast-Hungary in terms of DCI derives indirectly from the high rate of the protestant population. Concerning their theological

ideas, protestant denominations constitute the basis of religious reforms from many aspects. On the one hand, the inner disunions result in the formation of new denominations. On the other hand, the population that has lost its religiousness offers an available “market” for some new denominations. In the areas populated mainly by Protestants the rate of non-believers and non-answering persons is higher. It is the most spectacular in Middle-Hungary, where the rate of the Catholics is low, the rate of the Protestants is high, and the rate of the non-believers and the non-answering people is also high (PETE, J. 2003).

The areal pattern of RAI, calculated from the above indicators, is surprising, but at the same time it shows strong orderliness (see Figure 9). The orderliness can be observed in the form of a double centered concentric wave, starting on the one hand from Middle-Hungary, and, on the other hand, from East-Hungary.

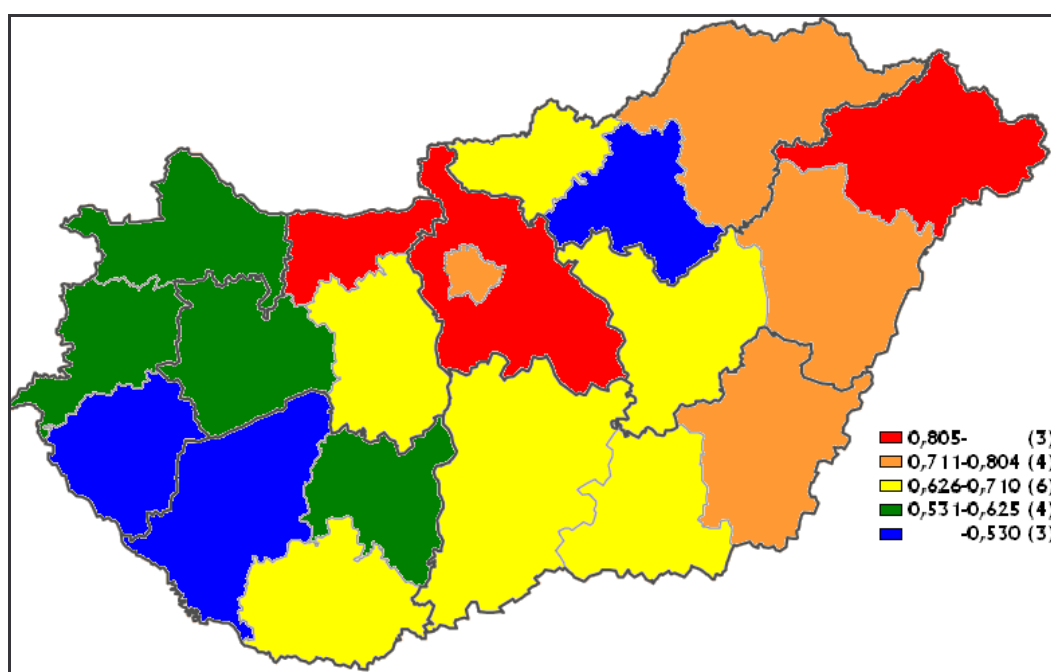


Figure 9 Religious activity by counties, from 1999 to 2002

The “surprise” is caused by the “direction” or the wave, showing, that in spite of the hypnotized and seemingly evident higher religious activity of Western-Hungary, the poles have been inverted. This can be interpreted in two ways. One is, that the term “religious activity” should be interpreted in a broader sense, including the above indicators in it, so that the term enables to describe the deeper strata of the different (horizontal and vertical) dimensions of the religious activity. The other is that the indicator itself needs revaluation. By the conversion of the factors, it may become feasible to carry out further denominational and territorial investigations. In the case of the individual denominations, for example, the DII and DCI can be replaced by the denominational and the church organizational structure. All these, however, need further investigations.

4. The possible exploitations of the results

The results of my PhD Thesis can be exploited in the following issues:

- (1) It represents a new direction of research, the investigation of religious activity.
- (2) RAI could serve as a basis for the further investigation in GR.
- (3) In the reflection of the data and the connections revealed in the course of sub-surveys, a social group that belongs to churches and denominations could be well detected. Within this, by the analyses of various territorial-statistical indicators, the group of the “historical” churches could also be separated.
- (4) Religious activity has been adopted as a significant factor in the investigations of the regional development and the human resources. As long as we mean
 - a. prevention
 - b. consolidation
 - c. innovation
 - d. expansion
 - e. diversification (NEMES NAGY, J. 1998)

by regional development, the analysis of religious activity should take place in the investigations. If we refer the above activities to the features of religious activity, we can state that any shifts to a positive direction results in regional development. Some provisions can be maintained only in the case of diversification. The reason is, that religious diversification, that is, the increase of diversity, in some cases can derive from religious innovation. This, as an economical complementary of innovation, can contribute to the economical and social arrears of the area or region. At the same time the results of religious activity can contribute to the infrastructural and socio-cultural development of the region.

- (5) By the virtue of the comprehensiveness and, as well as the pioneer feature of the thesis, it can be adopted of academic purposes.

In the end I would like to delineate the possible further directions and the shortcomings of my investigations.

- (1) It seems useful to unfold the historical background and dimension of the GR relations of Hungary. Some issues can only be discussed in diachronic aspects.
- (2) A shortcoming of this thesis is the exploration and the analysis of the religious spatial structure of the individual denominations, except for some attempts.
- (3) The religious ecologic system requires more investigations, that is, an extended geographical analysis of the ecologic integration of religion.
- (4) Significant new results can be expected from the deep and systematic GR investigation of Hungary in terms of, for example, electoral districts. A political geographical description could be made by the GR investigations of the party preferences.
- (5) In the end, the system of international relations of the individual denominations should be revealed, by which the Hungarian religious space could be inserted in the global religious field.

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